

2006 Statewide Historic Preservation
Honor Award Presented to:

Musée culturel du Mont-
Carmel
For Restoration and Stewardship



The twin Baroque-style belfries of the Musée Culturel du Mont-Carmel dominate the St. John Valley skyline in the northern Aroostook County village of Lille. This is the most intact and architecturally significant of the surviving historic wooden Catholic churches constructed in the Acadian settlement along the River. It was built in 1909 and began life as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

In 1984, it was the first parish to be closed by the Bishop of Portland and was given, complete with all the contents, to the newly formed L'Association Culturelle et Historique du Mont-Carmel. Led by the incomparable Don Cyr, the nonprofit organization visualized a performing art center and museum here. So, they systematically went about obtaining grants from every source they could think of, including the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Maine Department of Economic Development and private foundations.

They began work by removing the confessionals, carpets and most of the 1960s "improvements". The foundation was fortified or replaced, heating, plumbing and electrical systems were replaced, a new roof was installed and a new accessible addition was constructed at the rear. All 52 windows were restored at a cost of \$50,000.

Then they turned their focus to the towers and the angels. The two 7' tall wooden angels were aging badly, so they were taken down and retired after a mold was made for replication purposes. Today, \$40,000 later, they reappear in fiberglass, are filled with expanding foam insulation, and are anchored with stainless steel supports that go down 8' into the towers. The metal tower caps were cleaned, primed and finished with gold-colored paint.

Inside, all of the tin has been removed to reveal the original 1910 paintings, stencils and thousands of gold leaf stars. And this year, thanks to yet another CDBG grant of \$100,000 and \$31,000 in matching donations, the exterior will be painted its original color of deep olive green with gold trim windows.

The Musée culturel du Mont-Carmel is located at:
Route One
Lille, Maine, 04746
(207) 895-3339